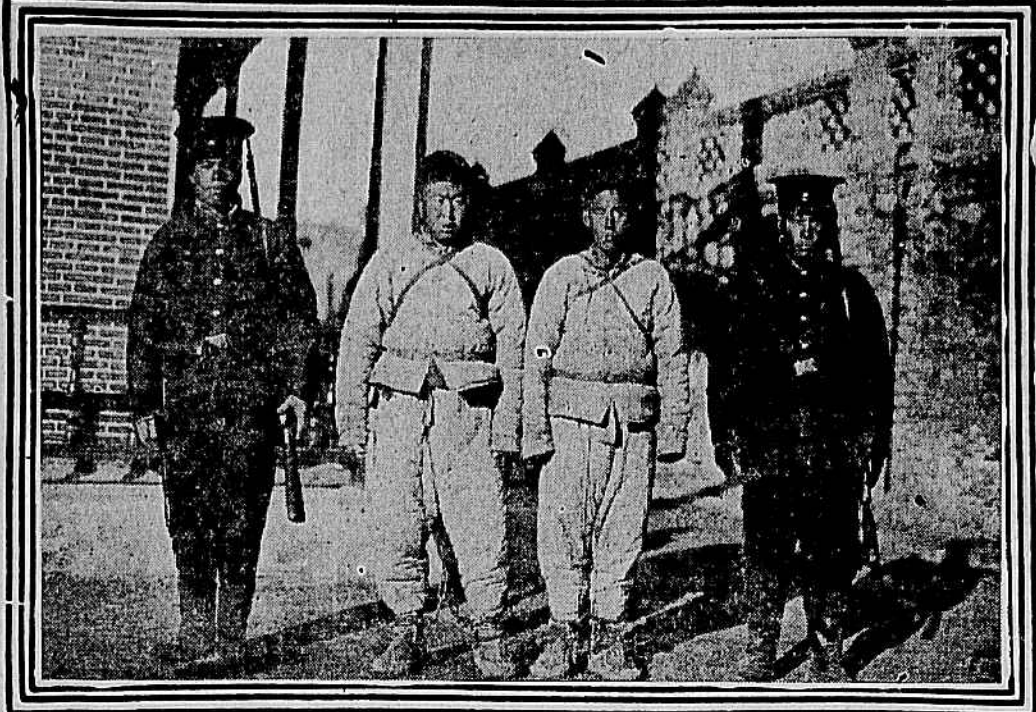


Awakening of Manchuria; How the Tartars Are Reforming Their Schools, Courts and Prisons



IN MUKDEN'S NEW PRISONS. THE CONVICTS ARE TALL, BURLY FELLOWS.



PRISON OFFICIALS.

BY FRANK G. CARPENTER.

Mukden, Manchuria, 1909.
I find Manchuria rapidly awakening to the new civilization. This country has long been considered the most barbarous part of the Chinese Empire. The home of the Manchus, it has been held as synonymous with brigandage and corruption. Until recently neither life nor property was safe, and to-day there are guerrillas who swoop down from the mountains to levy taxes on travelers in transit and to blackmail the villages. The whistle of the trains on their way from Siberia to the Yellow Sea has sounded the death knell of the old civilization, and the hordes of Russians and Japanese, by whom the land has been overrun during the last few years, have been busy in nursing the new into life. Manchuria has now some of the most progressive of the Chinese officials as its rulers, and they are instituting all sorts of reforms. The larger cities have been cleaned. Mukden has streets free from filth, and all the way from here to Dairen the Japanese have been introducing Western ways.

Manchuria's New Schools.

Here in Mukden the changes are being made by the Manchurian officials. This country is a part of the Chinese Empire, and its officials are appointed from Peking.

It contains three great provinces, each of which has a Governor, and over the whole is a Viceroy, who lives at Mukden. Most of the reforms have been largely due to the Provincial Governor, His Excellency Tang Shao Yi, who was recently in the United States to return thanks for the remission of the Boxer indemnity. This man was for a long time Director of Railways of North China, and as such was closely associated with Yuan Shih Kai, who until lately held the place of Li Hung Chang in the councils of the empire. Under Tang common schools have been started, and the young Chinese mind is being trained along the lines of Western methods. The boys are studying arithmetic and the modern sciences, and they have a military drill several times every week. A big industrial school has been established, and also the agricultural college of which I have written in a previous letter.

I drove out into the country yesterday to look at the beginnings of a forestry department, which may some day clothe the bare, dry hills of Southern Manchuria with trees, and from there to an experimental farm, where modern agriculture is being taught.

Mukden's Industrial School.

Leaving the plantation, I visited the

Industrial school. This has now sixty students who are learning manual training under Chinese who have been educated abroad. It has large carpenter shops in which beautiful furniture is made, and that from the native woods. It is only the lower part of Manchuria which has no forests speak of. Along the Sungari River there are vast areas of walnuts, oaks and other hard woods.

Some of the best timber is only eighty miles from the railroad, but the transportation is so bad that Oregon pine can be brought across the Pacific and up here to Mukden and sold at lower rates than the Manchurian lumber. At present there is a scheme to build a railroad to connect the forest region with the South Manchurian system, and when that is done the Manchurian wood will be used all along that line from the Yellow Sea to Siberia. Some of the finest of the native timber is walnut. It is the color of cherry and its grain is as close as that of birch. In the industrial shops this wood is being used for fine furniture.

When stained it closely resembles mahogany.

This school teaches all sorts of iron working. It has spinning and weaving departments, glass-blowing shops and all the up-to-date appliances of the manual training schools of America. The students are bright young fellows of from fourteen to eighteen years of age. They live in the school, sleeping in dormitories, five boys to the room. Each room has a kang or brick ledge about two feet high in it. This is heated by flues which run under the floor. The boys study in their rooms during the day, when not in the class-rooms, and sleep there at night. As in all the new schools, the students have a special uniform and are subject to military drill. They wear trousers, jackets and caps and their feet are shod with boots of black cloth.

The Tartar Courts Reformed.

A great reform is going on now in the Manchurian courts and as to all matters of law. A well organized police service has been established, and there are now uniformed policemen on every block.

These men wear padded black clothes of almost European cut. The long Manchurian gown has been abolished, and they have coats, trousers and boots. Their pistols are covered with caps and they carry clubs as big around as a broomstick and almost as long. The clubs are painted black to make them look like ebony, and in fact they are exceedingly light, and a good blow upon a hard skull would break them in pieces. The policemen still have strips of white cotton about four inches wide wound around their left arms, as a sign of their mourning for the late Emperor. For months after His Majesty's death, they dared not shave their heads, and their black hair, except where the pigtail came forth, stood up like a shoe brush all over the scalp. Some of the police carry swords.

The system of justice in the Manchurian courts is being reformed. The torturing of prisoners to make them confess has been largely done away with, and slitting to death has been abolished. Still, I have met no criminals wearing the cage, although this was a common sight during my several previous visits to China. About eight years ago I saw three women locked together in a framework of boards three feet wide and six feet long. Their necks were fitted into holes, and the framework was such that it could be opened and closed. The women could not feed themselves, and they could not move unless they all went together. At the same time I saw men undergoing similar punishment. They were loaded down with heavy planks which rested upon their shoulders, their heads coming out through a hole in the centre. Some such cages were further weighted with iron. I saw one man who was inclosed in a barrel so tight that his head came out through a hole in the top, and his hands through the sides. The holes were just large enough for the wrists; the man could not scratch himself nor convey his food to his mouth.

At that time no criminal could be punished until he had confessed, and every Chinese who was arrested was pounded with a bamboo on his bare thighs or struck on the hips with a piece of leather, or made to kneel upon sharp chains until he could stand no longer and said he was guilty. Such things have been abolished here in Manchuria, and, I understand, in China as well.

Prison Reform in Manchuria.
I spent the greater part of to-day in going through the new prisons which have just been built here at Mukden.

They are far different from those I have visited in China. A few years ago I went through the jails at Shanghai, notwithstanding a warning that the prisoners might tear my clothes off if I did so. On my way to the prisons I saw many men loaded with cages. One was standing in a frame work so hung by his neck that his toes barely touched the ground. I could smell the prison before I came to it, and was almost sickened by the terrible stench as I went through. The buildings were low Chinese structures, without floors or sanitary conveniences. The convicts were chained to the walls like wild beasts, and some had chains about the neck as well as the feet. The prison had its dead house connected with it, and deaths from starvation and torture were common. The jailers got most of their income from squeezing. They had the right to sell food to the criminals, and the prisoners who had no money were likely to starve. The law gave each man certain fixed rations, but the jailer could furnish less or more as he pleased.

Mukden's New Prisons.
The prisons I have visited here are in costly buildings covering acres, and I found the criminals treated like men, not beasts. It was through the courtesy of Liang Yu Ho, the counselor of the viceroy, that I was able to inspect them. Mr. Liang is a graduate of Yale College, and as such is glad to have America know what his country is doing along the lines of our civilization. He sent two English-speaking Chinese officials with me, and a director of the penitentiary accompanied us as we went through the wards. We visited two prisons during the morning, and in one found 370 convicts working away at all kinds of labor.

This latter prison covers about four acres. It is surrounded by a wall of gray brick fifteen feet high, and its front gate is guarded by two six-foot Manchurian soldiers who presented arms as we entered. The buildings are large one-story structures made of gray brick and heavy tiled roofs. They are so built that they form a central point like the spokes of a wheel, so that the guards standing at the hub can command four or five aisles at one time. The cells face the aisles on each side, and the architect altogether is not unlike that of our best prisons at home.

These buildings are situated in courts, one of which we entered as we came through the gate. At the same time a gang of seventy-five convicts marched in to take their afternoon meal. They were all tall, burly fellows, weighing, I venture, more than the average Chinese of America. They all wear queues and their faces are about the same as those of the Tartars I see on the streets. The prisoners dress in a jacket or coat which falls to the hips and a pair of thick trousers which look as though they were made of quilted cotton, such as we use on our beds. The material is wadded cotton. The color is light gray, except on the back, where a cross of dead black is painted. Each man wears shoes of pigskin, and his legs are so chained together that he can take but one short step at a time.

As I looked I asked the director to point out some of the bad cases. He replied:

"You can tell them by their collars. You see the most of the collars are of the same gray color as the rest of the garment; but some are red, black and blue. Those black-collared fellows are each in for thirty years. The convicts working the big collars are in for twenty years, those wearing red for ten, while the gray have still shorter sentences. The most of our men have been convicted of robbery and assault with intent to kill. The murderers we have in another prison, which has just been constructed."

Convicts at Dinner.
After making the picture I followed told me that they were in the kitchen and saw them eating. As I looked the director told me that he gave them two meals a day, consisting of a breakfast at 9 and a dinner at 3. Said he:

"The men rise at 5:30 A. M. and stop work at 5 in the evening. It costs us about 5 cents for each man to feed each day, and we are now spending 50 Mexican dollars, or about \$20 in gold, per day for the food. One of the 36 men we have here. We make the prisoners pay for their meals by their work. In each group of four men, there is a man who is taken out for his board and clothes. The rest he can put in his pocket. Oh, I assure you, they are treated quite well."

While we waited the food was brought in, and the prisoners who had seated themselves in the aisles as they entered the ward, before doing so each man took out his back a little brown canvas knapsack, containing all the individual furniture he has for his prison life. This consists of a folding camp stool four inches high, six inches wide and twelve inches long; a pair of wooden chopsticks and two porcelain bowls, each of which holds half a pint. At a given signal the men pulled the stools from their knapsacks and sat them down on the floor, and at a second signal they arranged themselves on the stools in two long aisles facing each other. No water was brought in great water-tight baskets filled with steamed sorghum seed and vegetable soup. The millet was served first. It was shoveled out into bowls much like wash basins, and one of these was placed on the floor in each group of four men. There was a spoon in the basin, and each convict filled his porcelain bowl. At the same time a bowl of the soup was handed around, each man helping himself, using his other bowl for the purpose.

In eating, the men picked some of the vegetables out of the soup with their chopsticks, and, mixing them with the sorghum, raised the bowl to their mouths and scraped the food in with the chopsticks. They seemed to enjoy the meal, and I was told that it was better than they had been accustomed to before they were caught. Sorghum seed thus cooked is the chief food of Manchuria, holding the same place that bread and meat have with us.

A Look at the Cells.
After this I took a walk through the wards and examined the cells. They are about twelve feet square and well arranged as to ventilation and light. They are heated by the kangs, upon which the men sleep. The fire is put into a hole at the

lower front of each kang, and an armful of straw suffices to keep one room warm the whole night. Five prisoners are kept in each room.

I asked as to punishments, and was told that the barbarous customs had been done away with, although the convicts are still bamboozled. They have no bars in the cell doors, but the director said that it is not allowed to keep a man in one of these for more than one day at a time. At my request he showed me a dark cell and shut me inside. The cell was of triangular shape with a back just large enough for the door, and the two long sides meeting in an acute angle at the opposite end. I looked at the back of the door upon the floor, but he could hardly open it without touching the walls. The room had no bed, no chair, and it was unheated. The food was thrust in through a little hole in the door, as arranged with a wheel so that it could be drawn without admitting the light. After the door was closed upon me the darkness was such that I could be felt. There was no ray of light anywhere, and I was decidedly relieved on being let out.

In the Workshops.
Leaving the cell, the director took us through the workshops. Until now no labor of any kind has been done in the prisons. Here every man learns a trade and all sorts of things are made to be sold in the stores. The first shop we entered was devoted to saddlery and shoe-making. This is about 150 feet square, and scores of these gray-gowned, pig-tailed Manchus were laboring in it. Some sat on low stools before shoemakers' benches, pegging and sewing; others were cutting out the fat boots used by the army, and a third group was working on sewing machines, joining pieces of leather together. I walked over to them and examined the machines. They were all marked "Singer," and had been imported from America. In another factory was a gang of carpenters and cabinet makers, and in a third about two dozen convicts were spinning and weaving. The spinners sat on the floor, turning their wheels with the hand, and the weavers were using looms worked by the feet.

In another place they were weaving carpets and rugs made of the hair of the twenty-five square. Such rugs are made on a great frame work which stands upright inside the room. The weaving begins at the bottom, and as the rug progresses the men have to use scaffolds upon which they sit while they draw the threads in out. The work is done by hand, and that in designs of Oriental patterns, composed of many-colored wool. One of the rugs now on the frames is to be fourteen feet wide and twenty feet long. It is being made for the American Consulate Company's new building in Mukden.

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